Public School Accountability (2000-2001)

Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP): How California's Low-Performing Schools Are Continuing Their Efforts to Improve Student Achievement

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Highlights

The second year of the California Department of Education's research study of the 430 schools in Cohort 1 of the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) yielded the following information about the 80 schools funded by the federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program and the 350 Action Plan schools funded with state general revenues. The reader is cautioned that as this study lasts for three years, it may be too early for definitive conclusions about the efficacy of these interventions.

Conclusions about CSRD Schools

1. The CSRD program seems to provide a coherent, focused structure for school reform.

2. CSRD schools appear to be improving their capacity for systemic school reform.

3. CSRD professional development in reading/language arts and in math is linked to student academic needs and contributes to improved teacher instructional strategies.

4. District assistance to CSRD schools tends to be uneven and limited.

5. Some CSRD schools made strong API progress; over one-half did not achieve their API growth targets.

Recommendations about CSRD Schools

1. CSRD schools should continue school reform efforts, after CSRD funding ceases, to improve student academic achievement, particularly as measured by the API.

2. CSRD schools and districts should institutionalize comprehensive school reforms.

3. CSRD district staff should build the capacity of school personnel to collect and analyze data for on-site decision making to enhance and extend school reform progress.

Conclusions about Action Plan Schools

1. Action Plan schools tended to be in an "awakening" stage in their first year of implementation.

2. Nearly one-half (48%) of Action Plan schools contracted with their External Evaluators for school coaching in Year 1 of implementation.

3. Perceived and actual district support for Action Plan schools varies widely.

4. Professional development in Action Plan schools tends not to be clearly linked to student academic needs in reading/language arts and in math.

5. One-half of the Action Plan schools made their API growth targets in Year 1 of Plan implementation.

Recommendations about Action Plan Schools

1. Action Plan schools may need more than two years to build their school reform capacity and to improve and to sustain student academic achievement.

2. PSAA should be revised to include clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for school districts.

3. Professional development in Action Plan schools should be linked to student academic needs to enhance curriculum content, instructional practices, application of assessment information, and student achievement.

Introduction

California's Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999 ushered in a new era of

- Accountability for improved student academic performance through the Academic Performance Index (API)

- Interventions in low-performing schools through the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP)

- Awards and incentives for improving students' academic performance through the Governor's Performance Awards (GPA) Program.

The California Department of Education (CDE) is responsible for administration of each component of PSAA.

In addition, CDE research staff are conducting a statewide research and evaluation study of the 430 low performing schools that are participating in the first cohort of II/USP, funded for the first time in the 1999-2000 school year. Funding for their participation comes from two discrete sources: 1) state general revenue monies for 350 schools, and 2) federal categorical funds under the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program for 80 schools.

Focused on *implementation and impact,* the CDE research study is seeking to learn about the "value added" nature of II/USP (state funded) or CSRD (federally funded) participation over the authorized three-year funding cycle. The operational requirements of the two funding sources differ slightly in approach, but seek the same overall goals of school reform and increased student academic performance.

In the 2000-2001 school year, the first cohort II/USP schools entered their second year in the program. The CSRD "implementation" schools were carrying out their second year of implementing comprehensive school reform models to increase student academic achievement. The state funded Action Plan schools had completed an initial planning year with an External Evaluator and were now implementing their individual Action Plans designed to improve student performance.

This Research Summary describes findings from Year 2 of II/USP program participation by the first cohort of schools. Also included are overall conclusions about how Year 2 Action Plan and CSRD operations have progressed and pertinent recommendations for subsequent cohorts of both types of II/USP schools.

Contents of the Research Summary

Data Sources and Techniques

CDE researchers used the following three data sources to collect and analyze Year 2 Action Plan and CSRD implementation and impact information. These sources and analyses were almost identical to those used in Year 1 of the study.

1. CDE databases about II/USP school characteristics and API performance, Winter 2002

CDE researchers developed a profile of Cohort 1 II/USP schools statewide. Included are school demographic features, student achievement information, API progress data, and GPA program status (i.e. whether a school received an award or not.).

2. Site visits to 21 II/USP schools: 9 state funded Action Plan schools and 12 federally funded CSRD schools, Winter and Spring 2001

CDE researchers revisited 21 of the original 25 schools visited in Year 1. These schools had been selected to ensure geographic variety (i.e. urban, suburban, small city, and rural), ethnically and racially diverse student populations, grade-level variation (i.e. elementary, middle, and high school), range of API decile rankings (1 through 5), and variation in CSRD reform models and in II/USP External Evaluators.

The site visits included two aspects. First, researchers used interview protocols consisting of open-ended questions about common topics to collect information from school and district administrators, teachers, parents and community members, CSRD model providers, and II/USP External Evaluators continuing to consult with their Action Plan schools. Second were classroom observations at each grade level in individual schools, using an observation protocol.

3. Surveys of II/USP school and district personnel, Spring 2001

Surveys to Action Plan school principals focused on the schools' first-year experiences with their individual Action Plans. The two-page survey consisted of 30 closed-ended questions, with Likert scale responses from 1 (high) to 4 (low), and one open-ended question. The response rate was 74 percent.

The surveys sent to CSRD school principals inquired about the schools' second-year experiences with their reform models. The two-page survey consisted of 29 closed-ended questions, with Likert scale responses from 1 (high) to 4 (low), and one open-ended question. The response rate was 70 percent.

Administrative staff in the 131 Action Plan and in 38 CSRD school districts where Cohort 1 II/USP schools are located also received surveys. These individuals are responsible for Action Plan and/or CSRD schools in their districts. The surveys asked about district level experiences with Action Plan and CSRD implementation and impact in Year 2.

The two-page district administrator surveys contained Likert scale questions, as described above, and an open-ended question. The survey for administrators in districts with Action Plan schools consisted of 31 total questions. There were 29 total survey questions for administrators in districts with CSRD schools. The response rate from district administrators with Action Plan schools was 63 percent; from administrators with CSRD schools, 55 percent. (Some district administrators received both surveys because their districts had both types of schools.)

Characteristics of Cohort 1 CSRD and Action Plan Schools, 2000-2001

Using CDE databases, CDE researchers identified various characteristics of Action Plan and CSRD schools in Cohort 1 as well as other schools in API Deciles 1-5. Table 1 displays the characteristics of Action Plan and CSRD schools in comparison and contrast to each other and to other Deciles 1-5 schools.

Table 1: Characteristics of Cohort 1 Action Plan and CSRD Schools and Other Deciles 1-5 Schools, 2000-2001

Characteristic	CSRD Schools	Action Plan Schools	Other Deciles 1-5 Schools
Avg. Number of Students Tested	622	557	678
English Learners*	44%	35%	36%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students**	85%	69%	71%
Non-White Students*	92%	79%	81%
Fully Credentialed Teachers	79%	86%	83%

*   Weighted average of those tested
**   Weighted average of those included in API calculations

There are observable differences across the three school groups in terms of the number of students tested in grades 2-11 for the 2001 administration of the Stanford-9 (SAT-9) of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) system. On average, Cohort 1 CSRD schools tested more students (622) than did Action Plan schools (557). However, both these groups on average tested fewer students than did other Deciles 1-5 schools (678).

While Action Plan schools tend to closely resemble the other Deciles 1-5 schools, CSRD schools differ from both Action Plan schools and other Deciles 1-5 schools on the following characteristics.

- On average, the percent of English learners is greater in CSRD schools (44%) than in Action Plan schools (35%) or in other Deciles 1-5 schools (36%).

- CSRD schools also have a noticeably higher proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged student on average (85%) than either Action Plan schools (69%) or other Deciles 1-5 schools (71%).

- In terms of ethnic diversity, CSRD schools have a higher proportion of non-White students (92%) than Action Plan (79%) or other Deciles 1-5 schools (81%).

CSRD schools have a somewhat smaller percentage of fully credentialed teachers on average (79%) than other Deciles 1-5 schools (83%) while Action Plan schools have a somewhat higher proportion (86%) than either of the other two groups.

Study Findings

Findings from the CDE study fall into two categories: *implementation* and *impact*. Each category contains separate findings about CSRD and Action Plan schools from their second year of II/USP participation.

The reader is alerted to differences in the implementation stages of the state funded and the federally funded II/USP schools. The state funded schools, having completed a year of planning with an External Evaluator, just began implementation of their Action Plans during the 2000-2001 school year. During the same period, however, the CSRD schools continued with a second year of implementing their CSRD models. The study findings reflect these differences in implementation stages.

Implementation Findings About Federally Funded CSRD Schools

CSRD school site visits and survey responses from CSRD school principals and district administrators provide substantial information about the implementation of this federal program at school sites and in school districts. At times the data from the site visits and from the surveys conflict and are so noted in this Summary. There are seven categories of findings.

1. Implementation of CSRD Models
Site visit and survey data reveal that Year 2 CSRD school operations were generally positive. However, there was noticeable variation in CSRD model implementation depending upon the type of model selected.

Site visit data indicate that implementation progressed in more definite, visible ways in schools with structured, prescriptive models (i.e. those that incorporate specific curricula or instructional approaches, such as Success For All, Direct Instruction, etc.) than in schools with general, process-oriented

models (i.e. those that focus on revision of school operations such as staff development or school governance, such as Coalition of Essential Schools, Ventures, etc.). This variation was especially true in terms of curricular and instructional changes and for schools with relatively inexperienced teachers.

Survey data yield the following information.

- Nearly all (96%) of CSRD schools retained the same CSRD model from Year 1 to Year 2. (Those schools that did change their CSRD model providers did so with CDE approval.)

- 93 percent of principals agreed (68 % strongly) that their schools closely followed the format of their respective CSRD models. (Fidelity to the chosen model enhances the probability of attaining expected results.)

- 82 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators strongly or somewhat agreed that CSRD implementation at their schools progressed with no major difficulties.

Site visit data indicate that CSRD model providers generally provided on-site training and support services that were helpful to school staff responsible for implementing model components. The following survey responses support the preced-

The median number of full-time equivalent (FTE) days spent on-site by CSRD model providers during the 2000-2001 school year was 10.5, with a range from 1 to 100 days.

ing site visit information.

- 85 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators responded that their CSRD model providers collaborated closely with their schools to carry out Year 2 CSRD activities.

- 89 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators agreed that their CSRD model providers fulfilled all terms of their Year 2 contracts for services.

- 76 percent of principals and 80 percent of district administrators reported that their CSRD models provided assis-

tance and direction about enhancing their schools' governance structures.

- 91 percent of principals and 90 percent of district administrators indicated that their schools' governance structures had become more inclusive than before their CSRD models were implemented.

- 89 percent of principals and 91 percent of district administrators reported that their school staffs were highly satisfied, to date, with the services of their CSRD model providers.

Figure 1. Characteristics of Year 2 CSRD Model Implementation, 2000-2001
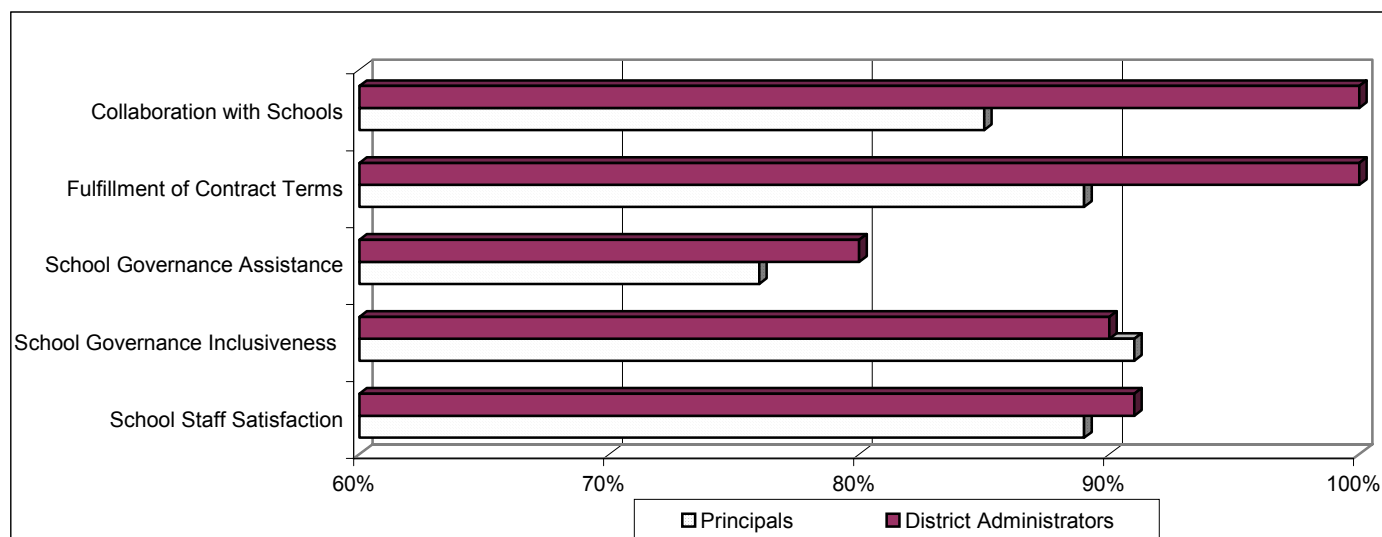
Source: CSRD Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

Site visits also reveal two other factors about CSRD model implementation in Year 2. First, instability of administrative leadership at the school or district level was a barrier to CSRD model implementation in some schools. Second was that CSRD-related whole-school reforms appeared more difficult to implement in middle and high schools than in elementary schools.

2.   Professional Development
Professional development is a major emphasis in the CSRD program. Site visit data document the usefulness of professional development to CSRD schools in the following ways.

- Professional development in CSRD schools directly addressed specific school and student academic needs unlike generically directed offer-

ings from the district level.

- Professional development in CSRD schools enabled teachers to assume more leadership roles in instruction, decision-making, and school governance.

- In schools with more structured CSRD models, professional development contributed directly to changes in curriculum and instruction.

CSRD survey data reveal the overwhelming satisfaction of principals and district administrators with the professional development offered by their CSRD model providers. (See Figure 2.)

- 93 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators

replied that their CSRD models provided professional development directly related to identified student academic needs.

- 96 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators responded that the CSRD models provided a clear focus for professional development in reading/ language arts; 90 percent of both groups responded similarly for mathematics.

- 95 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators reported that their CRSD model providers delivered instructional coaching to individual teachers in reading/language arts; 79 percent of principals and 81 percent of district administrators reported similarly for mathematics.

Figure 2. Characteristics of Professional Development Offered by CSRD Model Providers in Year 2, 2000-2001
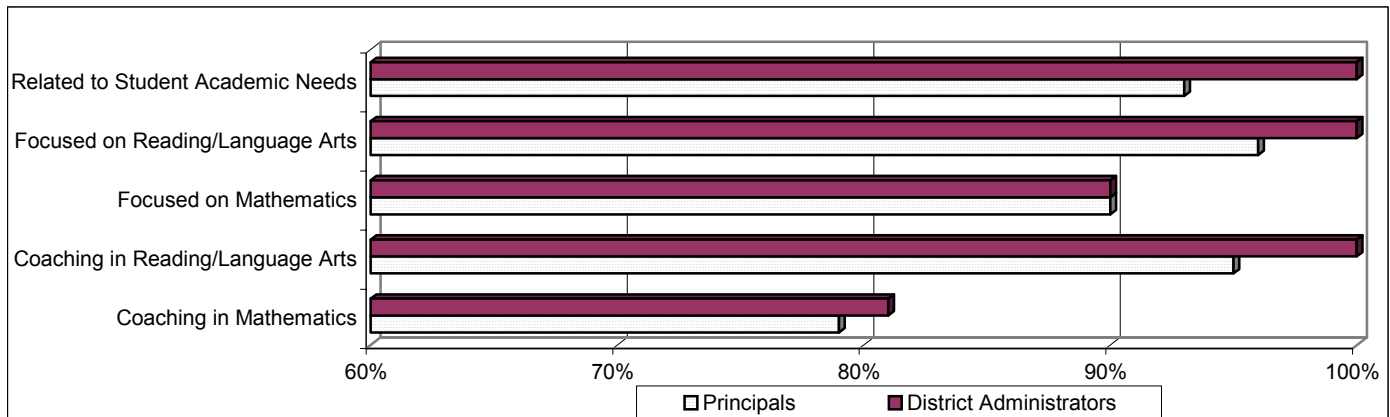
Source: CSRD Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

3.   Role and Support of the District

As school district involvement is a salient feature of CSRD in California, both schools and their districts submitted a joint application for CSRD funds, with district responsibilities clearly delineated. Contrary to those expectations, site visit data point to the uneven, sometimes limited, role of districts in CSRD implementation.

There are two important findings about district participation with the CSRD program in their schools. First, even though California's State Plan for CSRD **required** definite support roles for school districts, there was little consistency in the **actual** support districts provided to their CSRD schools. Second, school districts were generally more proactive in providing data analysis and evaluation services than in providing other kinds of support, such as eliminating barriers and leveraging funds for CSRD model implementation.

Survey responses largely support the site visit information, with the exception of the first point.

- 82 percent of principals and 95 percent of district administrators indicated that their districts had eliminated barriers to ensure effective implementation of the CSRD models selected by their schools.

- 83 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators agreed that their districts had assisted schools in evaluating the ongoing implementation of CSRD models.

- 83 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators reported that their districts had assisted schools in monitoring the progress of student academic achievement as part of CSRD model implementation.

4. Parent and Community Involvement

Parent and community involvement is a significant element of the CSRD program. Both site visit data and survey responses substantiate its prominence and overall improvement at CSRD schools.

Parent and community involvement appeared to be more extensive in CSRD schools using models that specifically emphasized this aspect of school reform than in other CSRD schools. In a parallel survey finding, 82 percent of principals and 90 percent of district administrators agreed that their CSRD models had provided assistance and direction about increasing parent and community involvement at their schools.

Although parents generally were not familiar with specific aspects of the CSRD program, they were usually supportive of changes associated with CSRD model implementation and understood their roles and responsibilities in this process.

> *Overall, 85 percent of principals and 90 percent of district administrators indicated that parent and community involvement at their schools had increased since their CSRD models were implemented.*

5. Evaluation Design and Strategies

An essential element of the CSRD program is program evaluation of both the CSRD process and its outcomes. Thus, CDE required both CSRD schools and districts to describe their respective evaluation plans in detail in their applications.

Site visit and survey responses indicate that CSRD schools did monitor and evaluate CSRD model implementation and impact in varying degrees. Unlike Year 1, there was considerable comparability in the information about this topic collected in the site visits and through the surveys.

From the site visit data CDE researchers learned that most CSRD schools depended on district or state-level assessment data (STAR and the API) for evaluating impact on student achievement. In addition, some schools used the assessments built into their respective CSRD models to continuously monitor student progress and to evaluate model implementation.

The following survey data largely support the preceding site visit information.

- 96 percent of principals indicated that their schools continuously monitored implementation of their CSRD models; 95 percent of district administrators reported that their districts continuously monitored CSRD model implementation.

- 95 percent of principals and 100 percent of district administrators reported that their schools used multiple measures to monitor progress in student academic achievement as part of CSRD model implementation.

6. Effectiveness of CSRD Models to Date

CDE researchers were interested in characteristics of CSRD schools after two years of implementing their CSRD models. Site visit and survey data suggest considerable effectiveness of CSRD model implementation to date. (For the purposes of this report "effectiveness" refers to operational changes in such areas as school organization, governance, staff attitudes and expectations, curriculum content, and instructional practices.)

Site visit data indicate that

- Generally, CSRD schools were becoming more "data driven" than before CSRD as a part of model implementation.

- Effective school change appeared to depend on the extent to which teachers made a commitment to their CSRD models and worked constructively with model providers.

- Reforms in specific subjects such as mathematics and language arts progressed well in middle and high schools with departmental support.

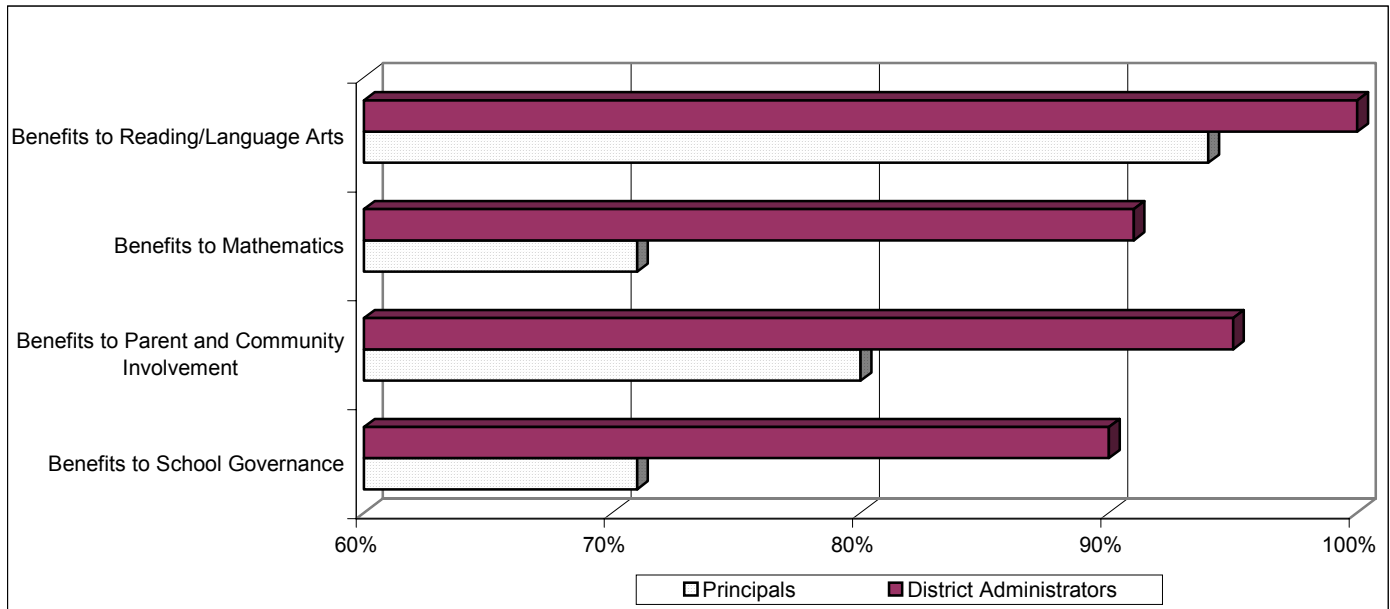Principal and district administrator survey responses strongly corroborate the site visit findings.

- 98 percent of CSRD principals and 100 percent of district administrators responsible for CSRD concurred that, overall, teachers in CSRD schools strongly supported the implementation of the schools' CSRD models.

- 93 percent of principals and 89 percent of administrators reported that the CSRD models matched schools' needs well.

The vast majority of principals (93 %) would recommend their **CSRD models** to schools with similar characteristics.

Similarly, 100 percent of administrators would recommend **CSRD program** participation to other districts with schools similar to their districts' CSRD schools.

- Large, but varying, percentages of principals and district administrators reported that assistance from their CSRD model providers was beneficial to their schools in the areas shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Effectiveness of Year 2 CSRD Model Implementation, 2000-2001

Source: CSRD Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

- Principals and administrators indicated that implementing CSRD models contributed to improvement in teachers' instructional strategies and to student and school performance as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Effectiveness of Year 2 CSRD Model Implementation Regarding Teaching and Student/School Performance, 2000-2001
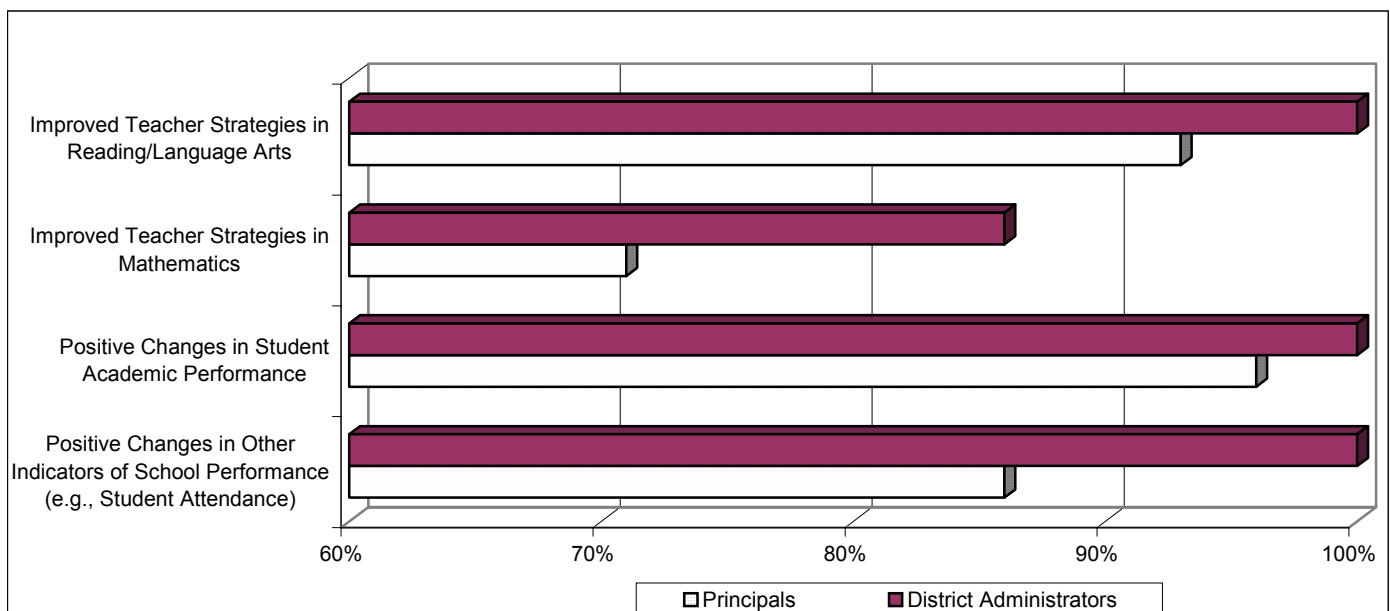
Source: CSRD Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

CDE researchers found six predominant categories of survey comments from principals and district administrators about the major contributions and benefits of CSRD to schools and districts in Year 2. Percentages reflect the grouping of similar responses to open-ended questions on the surveys. There is considerable overlap in the responses from principals and district administrators. Selected quotes exemplify the contributions and benefits in each category.

Major Benefits to School Districts from CSRD Program Participation in Year 2, 2000-2001

Comprehensive strategies for long-term change (12%)
"Focus on all aspects that are variables of student achievement—professional development, parent involvement, standards-based instruction."

Professional development to support model implementation (12%)
"High quality, focused staff development has resulted in greatly improved collaboration within district and professional community."

Data-driven focus (10%)
"A focus on student achievement has been developed and has resulted in improved student learning."

More effective classroom instruction (8%)
"The site has been able to increase the number of intervention reading/ math strategies to reach more at-risk students."

Improved student academic achievement (7%)
"School improved 73 API points when comparing 1998-99 to 1999-2000 scores."

Parent and Community Involvement (7%)
"Parent and community involvement have increased as the school developed a more positive leadership environment."

Source: CSRD School District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

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7. Capacity of Schools for Change

Site visits and survey responses suggest that, in general, CSRD schools displayed a capacity for systemic school reform during Year 2. However, this capacity is coupled with an unclear picture of whether comprehensive school reform will be institutionalized at the schools after CSRD funding ceases.

Site visit data reveal that, in most cases, participation in the CSRD program appeared to improve schools' capacity for systemic change, particularly by expanding teacher leadership roles and responsibilities. Overwhelming percentages of both CSRD school principals and district administrators concurred. Specifically, 95 percent of principals and all responding administrators agreed that the CSRD models are an integral part of systemic reform in their districts.

However, site visit data reveal that, overall, CSRD schools clearly needed additional district and state-level support for leveraging resources to support the long-term institutionalization of comprehensive school reforms. Principal and administrator survey responses vary noticeably from the site visit information. Ninety-five percent (95%) of administrators versus only 78 percent of principals reported that their districts had collaborated with CSRD schools to coordinate funds to implement CSRD models in Year 2.

Major Contributions by CSRD Models to Schools in Year 2, 2000-2001

Specific instructional strategies and techniques (17%)
"It [the CSRD model] provided a very clear set of instructional strategies and regular assessment information that enabled us to make mid-year corrections."

Professional development to support model implementation (14%)
"Ongoing staff development based on instructional needs as determined by student needs"

"Research-based and effective staff development"

Consistency and focus across the school (11%)
"[The CSRD model] has focused the staff on developing schoolwide academic goals that are meaningful and attainable."

Comprehensive strategies for long-term change (11%)
"The CSRD process, more than our model or model provider, has been our driving force for school improvement."

"To build capacity by implementing components of CSRD to be self-sustaining at the end of the grant"

Parent and community involvement (7%)
"Students, parents, and staff are fully involved in the school."

Data-driven focus (7%)
"Focus on data driven assessment and instructional adjustments/ interventions"

"We have learned to use data more effectively to target areas of improvement."

Source: CSRD Principal Surveys, Spring 2001

Implementation Findings About State Funded Action Plan Schools

School site visits and survey data yield considerable information about Year 2 experiences in the state funded Action Plan schools. In the 2000-2001 school year, these schools were beginning to operate the Action Plans for school reform that they had developed with their External Evaluators during the prior school year. At times the data conflict and are so noted in this Summary. There are seven categories of findings.

1. Implementation of Action Plans
There was considerable variation in implementation of schools' Action Plans according to site visit data and survey responses. Site visit data indicate that

- Schools varied widely in the amount of progress made in implementing their Action Plans in the first year.

- Action Plan implementation progressed better in schools with a strong principal or a staff person dedicated full-time to this effort than in Action Plan schools without such leadership.

Survey responses from Action Plan school principals and

The number of days that External Evaluators spent on site at Action Plan schools in Year 2 ranged from 1 to 40 days, with a median of 4.25 days.

Nearly one-half (48%) of principals and 59 percent of district administrators reported that their schools contracted with their External Evaluators for assistance in Action Plan implementation. (PSAA required Action Plan schools to work with External Evaluators during the first year of II/USP; subsequent work with them was optional.)

Of these respondents, 84 percent of principals and 90 percent of district administrators agreed that External Evaluator assistance was beneficial to their schools in implementing Action Plans.

school district administrators with responsibilities for II/USP reveal the following information.

- 93 percent of principals and 94 percent of district administrators strongly or somewhat agreed that their schools fully implemented first-year Action Plan activities.

- 93 percent of principals and 94 percent of district administrators agreed that, overall, teachers at their schools strongly supported Action Plan implementation.

- 80 percent of principals and 82 percent of district administrators indicated that implementation of the Action Plan progressed with no major difficulties.

Figure 5. Characteristics of Year 1 Action Plan Implementation, 2000-2001
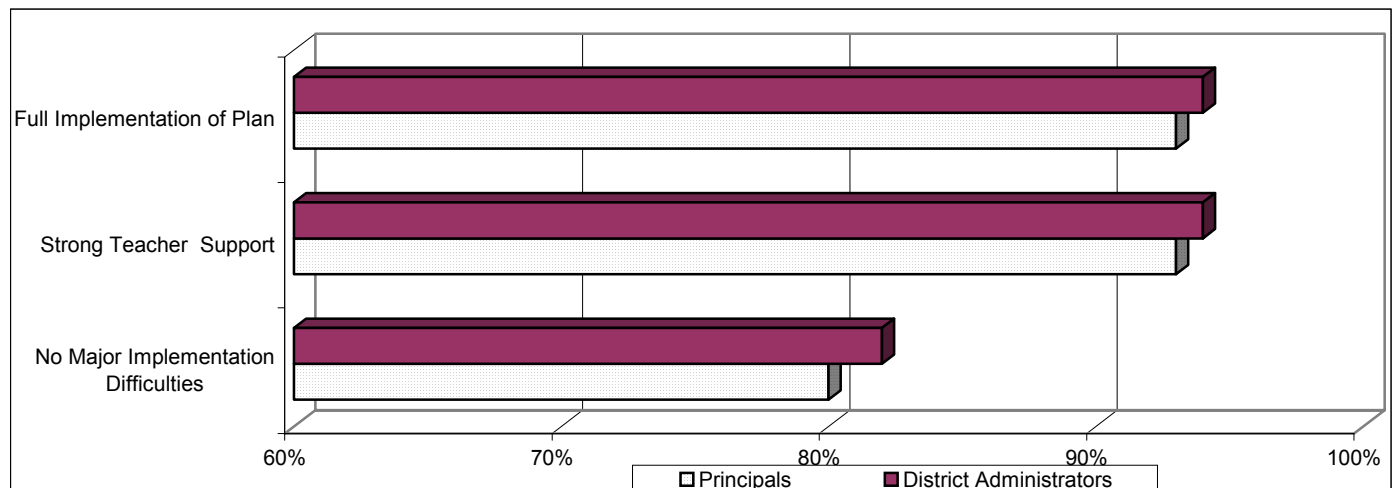
Source: Action Plan Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

2. Professional Development

There are noticeable contrasts between site visit data and survey responses about this aspect of Action Plan implementation. The site visits indicate that in some Action Plan schools, professional development activities did not appear to be linked to identified student needs and priorities. In other Action Plan schools, professional development activities were well organized at the school level and were clearly focused on school priorities, such as literacy or English learners.

Survey data sometimes contrast with site visit findings but reveal fairly consistent responses from principals and district administrators.

- 99 percent of principals and 98 percent of district administrators indicated that their schools' Action Plans specifically included strategies for improving student academic performance.

- 99 percent of principals and 94 percent of school district administrators agreed that their Action Plan implementation included professional development activities based on identified student needs.

- 98 percent of principals and 95 percent of district administrators agreed that the professional development activities in their Action Plans contributed to improvement in teachers' instructional strategies in reading/language arts.

- 85 percent of principals and 91 percent of district administrators agreed that Action Plan professional development activities improved teachers' instructional strategies in mathematics.

3. Role and Support of the District

Uneven district involvement with their Action Plan schools continued in Year 2, according to site visit and survey data. From site visits CDE researchers learned that

- Many school personnel saw the role of the district in Action Plan implementation as very limited, consisting largely of moral support.

- Although the PSAA lacks a clear defined district role in the II/USP, some districts did voluntarily provide tangible support to their Action Plan schools.

- The actual level of district support to their Action Plan schools varied by:
    - the size of the district (with large districts more equipped to provide support than smaller ones)
    - the structure of the district administration
    - the availability of district resources, such as data analysis and evaluation staff.

Survey responses contrast markedly with findings from the site visits. In addition, the responses from principals and district administrators vary widely on this topic. (See Figure 6.)

- 72 percent of principals versus 92 percent of district administrators indicated that the districts eliminated barriers to Action Plan implementation.

- 78 percent of principals versus 93 percent of district administrators agreed that the districts assisted their schools in monitoring student academic progress; 63 percent versus 92 percent replied similarly about monitoring Action Plan implementation.

- 79 percent of principals versus 92 percent of district administrators indicated that the district helped their schools match funds for Action Plan implementation.

- 83 percent of principals versus 93 percent of district administrators agreed that the district actively supports systemic change at their schools.

Figure 6. District Support to Schools for Year 1 Action Plan Implementation, 2000-2001
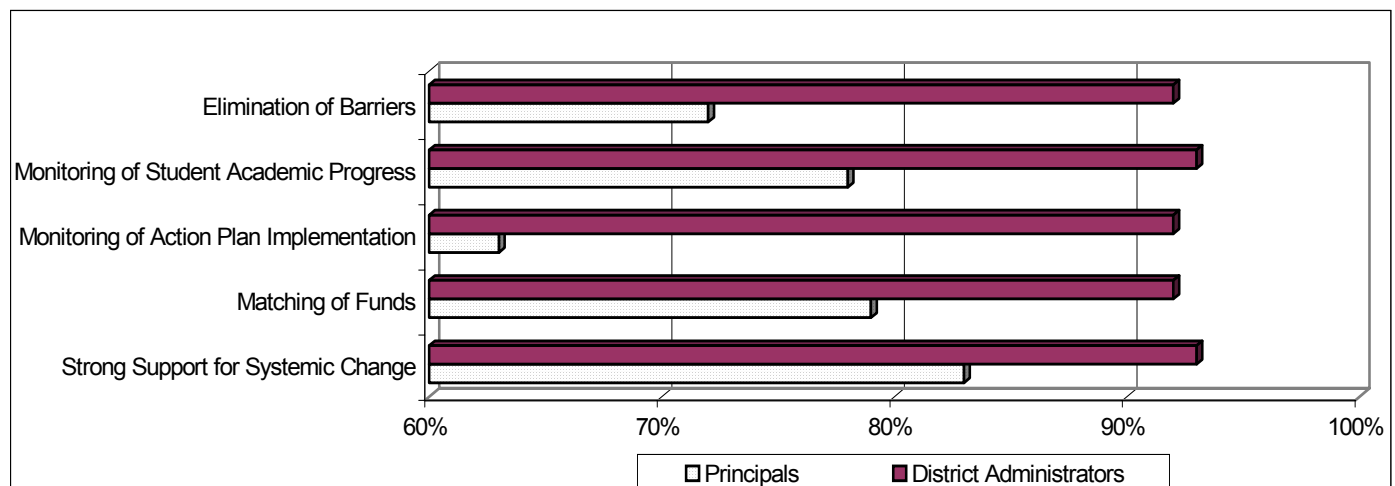
Source: Action Plan Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

4. **Parent and Community Involvement**

A cloudy picture about parent and community involvement emerged from the data collected. Site visits reveal that this aspect of school reform remains a challenge for Action Plan schools although improvement efforts are underway.

- Parent and community involvement appeared to be one of the most difficult areas for Action Plan schools to improve, even with concerted efforts to do so.

- Effective strategies in Action Plan schools for broadening and strengthening parent and community involvement included parent centers, bilingual communication opportunities, and school linkages to community-based health and nutrition services.

Survey responses suggest that schools are addressing this issue and that efforts have begun to alter the status quo.

- 99 percent of principals and 97 percent of district administrators agreed that their schools' Action Plans specifically included strategies to involve parents and guardians.

- 83 percent of principals and 89 percent of district administrators agreed that Action Plan activities contributed to an increase in parent and community involvement.

5. Evaluation Design and Strategies

There are striking differences between the site visit data and the survey responses about this topic. From the site visit data, CDE researchers learned that

- Few Action Plan schools had their own expertise or resources to analyze data in order to evaluate Action Plan implementation and impact, even when data were available.

- Lack of consistency in curriculum and instruction at the classroom level made it difficult for schools to evaluate Action Plan implementation or impact—i.e. "to know what's working" and what's not.

By contrast, survey data paint a different picture.

- 94 percent of principals and district administrators indicated that their schools' Action Plans did specifically include a plan to monitor and evaluate Action Plan implementation and impact.

- 96 percent of principals and 92 percent of district administrators agreed that their schools continuously monitored Action Plan implementation.

- 97 percent of principals and 93 percent of district administrators indicated that their schools used multiple measures to monitor progress in student achievement in the first year of Action Plan implementation.

6. Effectiveness of Action Plan Process to Date

Both site visit information and survey data suggest considerable effectiveness of the II/USP process to date in Action Plan schools. ("Effectiveness" refers to operational changes in such areas as school organization, governance structure, staff attitudes and expectations, curriculum content, and instructional practices.)

From the site visits, CDE researchers learned that II/USP status served as a wake-up call for many teachers and principals in Action Plan schools. Specifically, Action Plan development and implementation raised school staff consciousness about students' needs and their achievement potential. Yet, it is too early to specify the changes that have occurred in Action Plan schools as a result of first-year Action Plan implementation.

Survey data below and on Figures 7 and 8 tend to confirm the site visit findings.

High percentages of both principals (84%) and district administrators (96%) agreed that their school staffs were highly satisfied with participating in II/USP.

Overwhelming percentages of both groups (94% and 97%, respectively) would recommend II/USP participation to schools and districts with characteristics similar to their own.

- 98 percent of principals and 97 percent of district administrators indicated that their schools' Action Plans specifically included annual growth targets at least as high as those adopted by the State Board of Education.

- 97 percent of principals and 96 percent of district administrators indicated that Action Plans included academic objectives for a two-year period.

- 97 percent of principals and 95 percent of district administrators agreed that the Action Plans clearly focused on addressing overall student academic needs.

- 97 percent of principals and 96 percent of district administrators also indicated that the Action Plans focused on specific strategies to improve performance in reading/language arts; 92 percent and 93 percent, respectively, replied similarly about mathematics.

- 94 percent of principals and 93 percent of district administrators agreed that the Action Plan had focused the entire school community on improvements to increase student achievement in the first year of Action Plan implementation.

Figure 7. Characteristics of Action Plans, 2000-2001
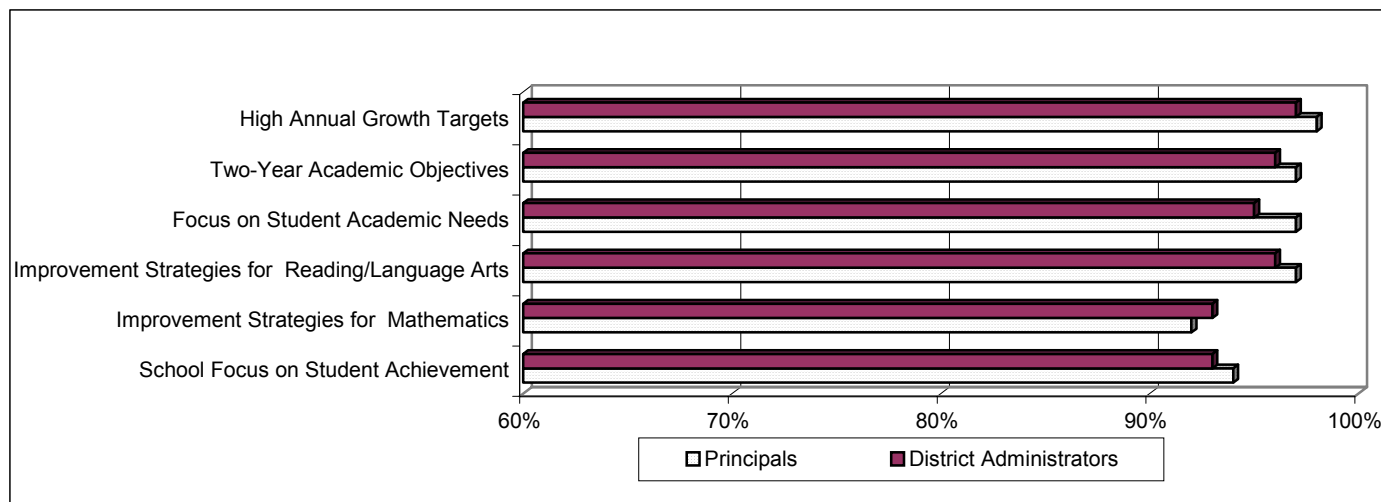
Source: *Action Plan School Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001*

- The vast majority of principals and district administrators agreed that II/USP participation had benefited their schools in reading/language arts (98%; 95 %), in mathematics (91%; 94%), in parent and community involvement (88%; 92%), and in school governance (83%; 86%).

- 91 percent of principals and 96 percent of district administrators agreed that there were positive changes in student academic achievement; 88 percent and 92 percent, respectively, agreed that there were positive changes in other indicators of school performance (e.g., student attendance) in the first year of Action Plan implementation.

- 84 percent of principals and 95 percent of district administrators agreed that school governance had become more inclusive in the first year of Action Plan implementation.

Figure 8. Effectiveness of Year 1 Action Plan Implementation, 2000-2001
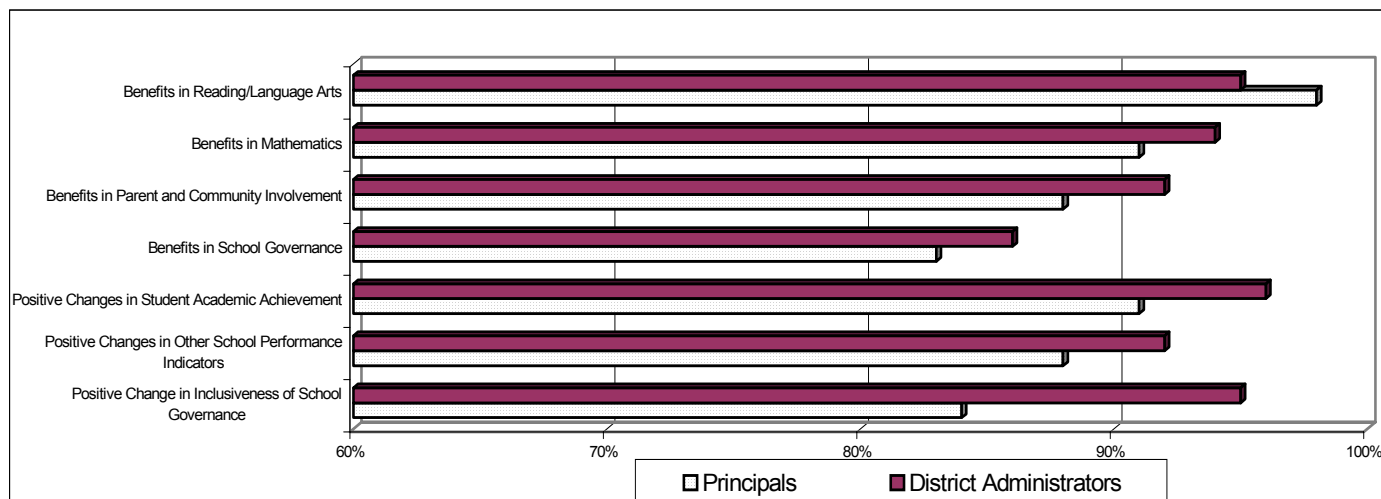
Source: *Principal and District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001*

CDE researchers found predominant categories of survey comments from principals about the major benefits of Year 1 Action Plan implementation to schools; from district administrators about the major benefits of II/USP participation to districts in Year 2. Percentages reflect the grouping of similar responses to open-ended questions on the surveys. There is considerable overlap in the responses from principals and district administrators. Selected quotes exemplify the benefits in each category.

Major Benefits to School Districts from Year 2 II/USP Participation, 2000-2001

Unified schools on common purposes or goals (12%)
"Gave schools the opportunity to examine what is working and not working at their sites and to institute changes."

Focused the school community on improving student achievement and test scores (12%)
"Focus on student needs and improvement efforts by entire school community"

"Focus on academic achievement with no excuses"

Improved professional development (8%)
"Learning more about effective instructional practices and programs"

Allowed for assistance or feedback from External Evaluator (7%)
"External evaluator identified areas where schools had blind spots and staffs to address the areas."

Provided funds and financial benefits (6%)
"Alignment of resources to meet needs of all learners"

Identified problems or needs (6%)
"[Action Plan] provides format for reviewing barriers to achievement of all students."

Source: Action Plan School District Administrator Surveys, Spring 2001

7. Capacity of Schools for Change

Information from the site visits and survey responses point to the potential for school change in Action Plan schools. Following are the pertinent site visit findings.

- A two-year Action Plan implementation time line may be too brief to significantly build a school's capacity for change.

- Many Action Plan schools saw II/USP participation as a turning point for taking responsibility to improve teaching and instruction instead of blaming students or their families for academic failure or lack of progress.

- Some Action Plan schools recognized that Action Plan implementation must address both academic and affective factors to create the most positive school environment for students, parents, and teachers.

This potential capacity for change is reinforced by the following survey information.

- 95% of principals (72% strongly) as well as 95 percent of district administrators (57% strongly) agreed that Action Plan activities are an integral part of systemic reform at II/USP schools.

Major Benefits to Schools from First Year of Action Plan Implementation, 2000-2001

Unified the school on common purpose or goals (12%)
"Having specific goals gives our students and staff something to strive for."

"School focus/vision is guiding the decision making process."

Improved professional development (11%)
"Increased opportunity for professional development based on student need"

"Providing professional development for teaching staff to differentiate instruction"

Focused the school community on improving student achievement and test scores (7%)
"It [Action Plan] greatly assisted us in the coordination of all initiatives to improve student achievement."

"Increased accountability for student learning"

Improved teacher and staff collaboration, communication, and teamwork (7%)
"The staff was pushed to collaborate in order to understand the need for change and how to implement [it]."

"For the first time in the history of this school we have held collaborative department and staff meetings."

Provided funds and financial benefits (6%)
"Made the lack of money not an excuse for why we can't move forward."

"Provided security in knowing there is money enough to support steps necessary to eliminate barriers."

Source: Action Plan School Principal Surveys, Spring 2001

Impact Findings about CSRD and Action Plan Schools

CDE researchers analyzed the most current 2001 API and GPA data for the CSRD schools and the Action Plan schools in II/USP Cohort 1 as well as for the other Deciles 1-5 schools. Also included are data for all schools statewide.

The API is the component of PSAA, which CDE has used to assess impact for both CSRD and Action Plan schools. The API uses a scale of 200 to 1000, with 800 designated by the State Board of Education as the statewide performance target for all schools. The API measures schools' yearly academic progress both overall (i.e. all students) and for significant subgroups of students (e.g., economically disadvantaged, etc.).

Public schools in California receive a yearly API score based on the performance of their students on the statewide assessment tests. Each year CDE sets specific school growth targets, overall and for each significant subgroup. The overall school growth target is calculated as five percent of the difference between a school's API base score and the statewide performance target of 800. Significant student subgroup growth targets equal 80 percent of the overall school growth target. PSAA also established a system of awards (GPA program) for schools that met both their overall and subgroup API targets. In the CDE analysis, there were 68 CSRD schools, 316 Action

Plan schools, 2755 other Deciles 1-5 schools, and 6359 schools statewide with valid API data. (Schools without valid API data were not included in the analysis.) The purposes of the data analysis were to determine

1. The school-level impact on student academic achievement after the second year of implementing CSRD reform models

2. The school-level impact on student academic achievement after the first year of implementing Action Plans

3. Comparison of CSRD and Action Plan schools with other Deciles 1-5 schools and all schools statewide with valid API data in terms of meeting API growth targets.

Table 2 summarizes the 2001 API targets, growth scores from 2000 to 2001, and target attainment for the four school categories described earlier. Table 3 displays characteristics of CSRD and Action Plan schools that met or did not meet their 2001 API growth targets. However, it is still early in the II/USP process to observe significant, sustained improvement in API scores and to determine specific reasons for the school-level changes noted.

Table 2: 2001 API Growth Targets, Growth Scores, and Target Attainment for CSRD and Action Plan Schools in Comparison to Other Deciles 1-5 Schools and to All Schools

Schools	Average API Growth Target	Average API Actual Growth	Average API Score	Met Both Targets*
CSRD (N=68)	14.8 points	20 Points	538	41%
Action Plan (N=316)	12.0 points	20 Points	588	50%
Other Deciles 1-5 (N=2755)	12.0 points	23 Points	583	52%
All Schools (N=6359)	7.2 points	17 Points	684	58%

Met overall and subgroup targets for GPA eligibility.

Table 2 displays that the 2001 student academic achievement in CSRD and Action Plan schools, on average, had the following characteristics.

- The API growth target of 14.8 points for CSRD schools was higher than the 12.0 target for both Action Plan schools and other Deciles 1-5 schools, and especially higher than the 7.2 target for all schools statewide. This larger average target for CSRD schools compared to other schools is due to the fact that CSRD schools tend to be concentrated in Deciles 1 and 2 and thus have greater API gains than Action Plan schools in order to reach the API performance target of 800.

- CSRD and Action Plan schools both had 2001 API growth of 20 points, compared to 23 points for other Deciles 1-5 schools and 17 points for all schools statewide.

- As a result of their 2001 API growth, CSRD schools had an average API score of 538 and Action Plan schools had an average API score of 588, compared to an average API score of 583 for other Deciles 1-5 schools and to an average API score of 684 for all schools statewide.

- In comparison to 52 percent of other Deciles 1-5 schools and to 58 percent of all schools statewide, only 41 percent of the CSRD schools and 50 percent of Action Plan schools met both 2001 growth targets for GPA program eligibility.

Table 3. Characteristics of CSRD and Action Plan Schools That Met or Did Not Meet Growth Targets, 2001

	CSRD SCHOOLS				ACTION PLAN SCHOOLS			
	Number* and Percent	Average Growth Target Points	Average Growth Points Made	Average API Scores	Number* and Percent	Average Growth Target Points	Average Growth Points Made	Average API Scores
Met API Growth Targets	28 (41%)	16.5 (8 to 38)**	53.4 (21 to 133)	546 (406 to 736)	159 (50%)	12.7 (3 to 40)	45.1 (9 to 169)	601 (443 to 797)
Did Not Meet API Growth Targets	40 (59%)	13.5 (5 to 28)	-3.2 (-59 to 20)	532 (411 to 699)	157 (50%)	11.2 (3 to 36)	-5.5 (-64 to 46)	574 (395 to 715)

* *Schools with valid 2001 API data*
***Range indicated in parentheses*

CSRD Schools

Tables 2 and 3 and additional analysis reveal the following information about the 68 CSRD schools with valid API data (85% of the total number of CSRD schools in Cohort 1).

- The average API 2000-2001 growth target was 14.8 points.

- The actual API 2001 growth, on average, was 20 points, ranging from –59 to 133 points.

- The average API 2001 score was 538, with a range from 406 to 736.

- The CSRD schools meeting their API growth targets differ from those that did not by

    - having a higher average growth target (16.5 vs. 13.5 points)
    - making higher average API growth (53.4 vs. –3.2 points)
    - attaining a higher average API score (546 vs. 532)

Action Plan Schools

Tables 2 and 3 and additional analysis show the following results for the 316 Action Plan schools with valid API data (90% of the total number of Action Plan schools in Cohort 1).

- The average API 2000-2001 growth target was 12.0 points.

- The actual API 2001 growth, on average, was 20 points, ranging from –64 to 169 points.

- The average API 2001 score was 588, with a range from 395 to 797.

- The Action Plan schools meeting their API growth targets differ from those that did not by

    - having a higher average growth target (12.7 vs. 11.2 points)
    - making higher average API growth (45.1 vs. –5.5 points)
    - attaining a higher average API score (601 vs. 574)

Study Conclusions and Recommendations

The preceding findings about CSRD and Action Plan implementation and impact in II/USP schools lead to several conclusions about their progress in Year 2 as well as recommendations for successive cohorts of II/USP schools. This Research Summary highlights the conclusions and recommendations below.

Conclusions about CSRD Schools

1. Overall, CSRD models appear to provide a focused, coherent structure for school reform in Cohort 1 schools.

2. CSRD schools seem to be greatly improving their capacity for systemic school reform, particularly by expanding teacher leadership roles, by focusing on student academic data as part of model implementation, and by improving parent and community involvement.

3. In the majority of CSRD schools, professional development, linked to identified student academic needs in reading/language arts and in math, is an integral feature of CSRD model implementation and contributes to improved teacher instructional strategies and practices.

4. District assistance to CSRD schools primarily concentrates on data analysis and evaluation services and less so on eliminating barriers and leveraging funds for CSRD implementation and continuation of reform efforts.

5. Although some Cohort 1 CSRD schools made strong API progress, over one-half of the Cohort 1 CSRD schools did not achieve their growth targets in Year 2.

Recommendations about CSRD Schools

1. CSRD schools should continue school reform efforts in Year 3 of funding, and beyond, to improve student academic achievement, particularly as measured by the API.

2. CSRD schools and districts need to focus on explicit strategies for institutionalizing comprehensive school reforms after CSRD funding ceases.

3. District staff should build the capacity of CSRD school personnel to collect and analyze data for effective on-site decision making to enhance and to extend school reform progress.

Conclusions about Action Plan Schools

1. Action Plan schools in their first year of implementation tended to be in an "awakening" stage regarding necessary systemic change to expand parent and community involvement and to take responsibility for improved student academic achievement.

2. Nearly one-half of Action Plan schools contracted with their External Evaluators for assistance with Action Plan implementation, with a high percentage (84%) of schools reporting that this assistance was beneficial.

3. Perceived and actual district support for Action Plan implementation varied widely across Action Plan schools, with considerable dissonance occurring among district administrators, principals, and other school personnel.

4. The linkage of identified student academic needs in reading/language arts and in math to professional development priorities in Action Plan schools tended to be unclear.

5. One-half of the Cohort 1 Action Plan schools made their API growth targets in Year 1 of Plan implementation; one-half did not.

Recommendations about Action Plan Schools

1. Action Plan schools may need more than two years of Plan implementation to build their capacity for school reform as well as to achieve and to sustain improved student academic performance.

2. PSAA should be revised to include clearly defined roles and responsibilities for school districts to assist their state funded Action Plan schools in all stages of the II/USP process.

3. Action Plan schools should clearly link professional development to identified student academic needs in order to enhance curriculum content, instructional practices, application of assessment information, and student achievement.